

10. BREEDING OF SAND MARTIN (*RIPARIA RIPARIA*) ON THE BANKS OF RIVER GANGA IN CHILLA PART OF RAJAJI NATIONAL PARK, UTTAR PRADESH

During my study on the elephants in Rajaji National Park, in the Siwalik hill of Uttaranchal, in May 1991 and 1992, I located a small nesting colony of Sand Martin (*Riparia riparia*) on the banks of River Ganga in the Chilla part of Rajaji National Park. There were 14 nest holes of the Sand Martin on the loamy soil of the western banks of River Ganga.

All the nests were at 1.5 to 2 m from the base of the bank, with 0.5 to 1 m bank above the nests. As the water was flowing below the nesting site, it was difficult to approach the nests. All nests were active as the birds were frequently visiting them. The riverbank above the colony was covered with very dense *Lantana camara* bushes. The approach from that side was very difficult as the scrub extended for about 25 m towards the landside. The nesting location selected by the species is probably such that there is no disturbance or

danger from any front, which is critical when selecting a nest site.

The Sand Martin is not known to breed in this part of the country; it is said to breed only in the Himalaya from Quetta eastwards, northeast hill states, West Bengal up to 4500 m (Ali and Ripley 1995; Grimmett *et al.* 1999).

This is the first report of Sand Martin breeding in the northwestern part of India more specifically in the Siwalik on the banks of River Ganga.

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11. SIGHTING OF SAND MARTIN (*RIPARIA RIPARIA*) AND PLAIN MARTIN (*RIPARIA PALUDICOLA*) IN BANASKANTHA DISTRICT, NORTH GUJARAT, INDIA

During our survey in Banaskantha district for rare and endangered plant and animal species, we observed two species of martins. One species, of which four birds were seen, had very distinct brownish grey breast markings, resembling a half collar along with the white throat and belly, and the brownish grey upper parts, and a deeply forked tail. From the colour and other characters, it appeared to be the Sand Martin (*Riparia riparia*). The second species, of which two individuals were sighted, had a very light brownish grey throat and breast with dull white belly and less forked tail. It was the Plain Martin (*Riparia paludicola*). These species are familiar to one of us (JJ), as both were frequently seen in the Siwalik hills and outer Himalaya, where JJ worked for many years.

The Sand Martin is distributed in the Himalaya from Quetta eastwards, NE hill states, West Bengal up to 4500 m and also said to winter in Pakistan, south to Makran, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Sri Lanka (Ali and Ripley 1995). It is a winter visitor and fairly common (Kazmierczak and Singh 1998) and has been noted west to Gujarat and found to breed in northeast India (Grimmett *et al.* 1999). We sighted the birds

flying over a small dam, behind a rest house, in the Jessore Sloth Bear Sanctuary in Banaskantha district of North Gujarat. The water body was surrounded by hills covered with dry deciduous and scrub forests. The bird is reported to stay around streams and lakes (Ali and Ripley 1995), large water bodies, around rivers and streams in summer (Grimmett *et al.* 1999).

The presence of Plain Martin in the Kachchh region has been established by Hume (1875, *Stray Feathers*, Vol. iii), mentioned in Ali (1945). According to Gallagher and Woodcock (1980), this species is found to be a migrant to India. It is distributed in Pakistan and N Subcontinent roughly south to Bombay (=Mumbai), Madhya Pradesh, Orissa to NE hill states and Bangladesh (Ali and Ripley 1995). It is said to be resident and subject to local movement (Kazmierczak and Singh 1998) mainly found in N and C Subcontinent (Grimmett *et al.* 1999). This species was sighted in the eroded riverine patch in a thorn forest, near Kotda village in Palanpur taluka of Banaskantha district, North Gujarat. This forest was dominated by *Acacia nilotica* interspersed with *Prosopis chilensis* on gentle undulating terrain.